

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1-7. (Cancelled).

8. **(Currently Amended)** A diagnostic method for detecting pulmonary aspiration or gastroesophageal reflux comprising:

orally administering to a subject a ~~diagnostic composition comprising microspheres, said~~ microspheres consisting of a bio-degradable polymer and having a diameter of about 0.1-10 microns;

obtaining bronchoalveolar lavage; and

detecting the presence of said microspheres within alveolar macrophages obtained by said bronchoalveolar lavage.

9. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 8 wherein the composition is administered in combination with food.

10. (Previously Presented) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 for detecting pulmonary aspiration wherein said polymeric microspheres are formed from polymeric materials selected from the group consisting of polyesters, polyphosphate ester, polyphosphazenes, polyorthoesters, polyanhydrides, polycarbonates and polyamides.

11. (Previously Presented) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 wherein said bio-degradable polymeric microspheres have a diameter of about 1-4 microns.

12. (Previously Presented) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 wherein said polyesters are selected from the group consisting of homopolymers and copolymers of lactic acid, glycolic acid, mandelic acid, caprolactone,  $\alpha$ -hydroxy acids, lactides and glycolides.

13. (Previously Presented) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 wherein said bio-degradable microspheres are formed of polylactic acid.

14. (Withdrawn) A food product in combination with a diagnostic composition for detecting pulmonary aspiration said composition comprising bio-degradable polymeric microspheres having a diameter of about 0.1 – 10 microns.

15. (Cancelled).